

Suitspeak

1 What exactly is suitspeak?

It's that language full of jargon and cliché used by the corporate end of town:

I don't have enough bandwidth with everything that's on my plate, but ping me anyway because at the end of the day it's on my radar and I don't want to be thrown under the bus because I didn't circle back around on this no-brainer.

Management jargon

Why talk about improving customer service when you can:

Consider what functionality this single-end-to-end business solution provides out of the box in order to meet the requirements these scenarios demand.

Or why say 'companies are helping businesses to develop their systems' when you can say:

Vendors in the BI arena are manoeuvring to empower end-users with the ability to customise analytic applications in a effort to meet evolving business needs.

Corporate clichés

Then there are the classic clichés that managers use to show they are all in the same club:

blue sky thinking	creative thinking
improve our synergy	work well together
open the kimono	be transparent
paradigm shift	major change
pick the low hanging fruit	solve the easy problems
put all our ducks in a row	get everything in order
run it up the flagpole	get feedback from others
sing from the same hymn sheet	take the same position

And here are some of the latest workplace clichés:

boil the ocean	take on an overwhelming problem
circling the drain	about to go broke
connect the silos	talk to each other
engage in ideation	think of a new idea
nano-manager	an incredibly picky manager
ping me	contact me
post a negative profit	report a loss
take this offline	talk about it later

2 Why do companies speak like this?

To make their services sound more sophisticated

They think if it sounds impressive, you might buy it without understanding it:

As a means of simultaneously decomposing both the optative and indicative parts of a requirements problem, from an abstract business level to concrete system requirements, we leverage the paradigm of projection in both approaches while maintaining traceability to high level business objectives.

To avoid answering a straight question

Here's a reply to an email asking if a store stocks blank CDs:

We are currently in the process of consolidating our product range to ensure that the products that we stock are indicative of our brand aspirations... As a result of the above certain product lines are now unavailable whilst potentially remaining available from more mainstream suppliers.

Translation: no, we don't stock blank CDs.

3 When is suitspeak a problem?

It's not actually good for business

A few years ago, a UK survey discovered that one-third of the public boycott products specifically because of their writing. This was costing firms a staggering \$10 billion a year in lost trade. Those figures translated to the Australian economy would be some \$2 billion.

It can be used to paper over reality

One company wrote to me recently explaining that:

As part of our commitment to our clients we are realigning your client management team to further service your current and evolving needs and to strengthen your relationship with us.

I think they mean that they sacked the people who used to answer the phone.

It can be used to deny consumers their rights

Warranty gobbledeygook and online terms and conditions can be so full of corporate speak consumers don't bother to read them, and could be missing out on their rights.

4 How might our national anthem sound in suitspeak?

Australians all let us rejoice	National stakeholders going forwards should be committed to visionary communications
For we are young and free	for we incubate next-generation scenarios that leverage dynamic functionalities
With golden soil and wealth for toil	with mission-critical infrastructure to maximise world-class deliverables
Our home is girt by sea	our brickware harnesses frictionless supply chain scenarios.

Of course, this text suffers from 'a high-end negative architecture,' which means the words don't actually fit the music.

5 The jargon generator

So is there anything really sophisticated about suitspeak? No, in fact, you can generate it randomly. Play the game of suitspeak in four easy steps.

1. Take some verbs, especially ones that are really nouns.
2. Add some adjectives that sound impressive without saying anything.
3. Round it off with the most impressive abstract nouns you can muster.
4. Mix them up at random and you are ready to bamboozle:

We should optimise next-generation scenarios.

Let's facilitate some high-end methodologies.

We need to incubate visionary architectures.

Our focus will be to leverage holistic functionalities.

Verb	Adjective	Noun
strategise	frictionless	scenarios
generate	seamless	infrastructure
facilitate	granular	content
optimise	integrated	action points
incentivate	scalable	models
innovate	transparent	solutions
streamline	mission-critical	schemes
leverage	impactful	users
synthesise	next-generation	communities
utilise	cutting-edge	deliverables
harness	visionary	architectures
integrate	high-end	supply chains
incubate	holistic	markets
engage	24/7	stakeholders
implement	strategic	methodologies
empower	dynamic	relationships
deliver	efficient	brickware
enable	customer-centric	technologies
engineer	enterprising	functionalities
transform	world-class	convergence
ideate	compelling	propositions
support	axiomatic	resources